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## FL Closer to Animal-Friend Plate

**W**e're on our way! Despite some setbacks, the Florida animal-friend license plate is closer to reality. Once it's available, the license plate could provide millions of dollars for the sterilization of dogs and cats throughout the state for years to come.

On December 1 of last year, SERO staff, on behalf of the Florida Animal Friend Coalition, delivered more than 22,000 surveys to the state Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to start the process of getting the license plate approved by the Florida Legislature. The surveys represent Florida drivers who are interested in purchasing the plate when it becomes available.

The state requirement that was *not* met was one requiring a \$60,000 fee to pay in advance for the development of the plate. However, the legislation filed to create the plate also allows for the first proceeds from plate sales to pay that fee.

The primary sponsors for the Florida  
*continued on page 2*

**SERO Director Laura Bevan and Program Coordinator Sandy Christiansen present 22,000 surveys to Florida officials asking for the animal-friend license plate.**



JACKIE MCTIGUE/HSUS

## SERO Responds to Disasters on Two Coasts

**F**all 2003 brought natural disasters to both coasts of the United States. In September, Hurricane Isabel moved inland as a Category 2 storm impacting North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. In October, Southern California experienced the worst wildfires in its history. SERO Director Laura Bevan joined the HSUS National Disaster Animal Response Team (N-DART) to help animals on both coasts.

### Isabel Animal Impact Light Thanks to Preparation

Hurricane Isabel brought wind and water damage to the states it impacted. In North Carolina, the State Animal Response Team (SART) coordinated the opening of 13 temporary animal shelters set up near Red Cross shelters for human evacuees. This allowed pet owners to keep their animals close by until the storm waters receded and they could return to their homes.

National DART's job was to conduct damage assessment. Bevan coordinated the teams that spread out across the coast, checking on animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and the overall impact of the storm on animals. Aside from discovering a destroyed poultry farm with about 400 chickens injured and roaming loose, The HSUS quickly determined that overall the state's animals had fared well.

"I think all the work and preparation paid off during Hurricane Isabel," says Melissa Seide Rubin, HSUS vice president of field services. "For the most part, local officials



LAURA BEVAN/HSUS

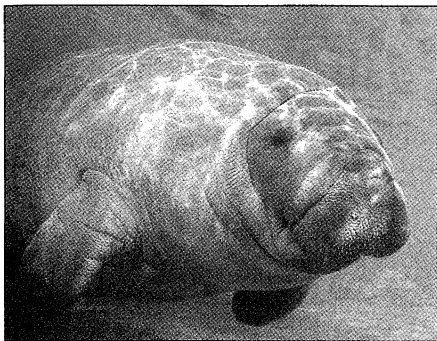
**HSUS disaster teams helped rescue hundreds of chickens stranded when Hurricane Isabel damaged the building where they were housed.**

were able to take care of their own needs."

### California Firestorms Wreak Deadly Havoc

The Southern California wildfires were a different situation. At least five victims reportedly died with their dogs by their side. Another victim was critically burned when she apparently tried to save her cat. Others died trying to evacuate their horses through the flames. Those were the kinds of scenes The HSUS tried to prevent as N-DART worked with local humane and animal control officials to urge residents to take preparatory steps as the fires approached. We also helped to evacuate animals when they were in the path of the flames or when they were in restricted areas where the owners were not able to provide care.

Bevan and HSUS disaster team member Melissa Forberg of Walton County, Florida, traveled to San Bernardino County to join more than 25 N-DART members and volunteers working with local animal services and the Humane Society of the San Bernardino Valley to set up a huge pet-  
*continued on page 2*



## Manatee Gets Reprieve

The Florida Manatee will maintain its endangered status in Florida for at least another year. Last November, the state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) postponed consideration of downlisting the manatee from endangered to threatened. SERO staff joined other members of the Manatee Coalition, including Save the Manatee Club, to oppose the downlisting at an FWC meeting in the Keys.

"The proposal to downlist the manatee was based purely on political considerations, not whether this gentle mammal was actually out of the woods," according to SERO Director Laura Bevan. "In fact, scientific studies, including one by FWC's own Florida Marine Research Institute, have determined that Florida's manatee population could be reduced by more than 50 percent within the next 45 years."

The Commission tentatively plans to reconsider downlisting the manatee later this year. With the number of manatees dying at all-time highs, the Manatee Coalition will continue to oppose efforts to reduce protections for this species.

## Legislative News

**S**ERO is supporting the following bills in our region. To learn more, visit [www.hsus.org/sero](http://www.hsus.org/sero).

### Alabama

- S.B. 41, humane euthanasia of shelter animals and certification of euthanasia technicians
- H.B. 91, mandatory sterilization of animals adopted from shelters

continued from "Disasters," page 1  
friendly shelter next to a large Red Cross shelter at the old airport. We also provided support and information to those pet owners who chose to camp out in the Red Cross shelter parking lot with their animals rather than be separated from them.

The majority of HSUS teams focused on rescuing pets left behind in the mountains. "We spent most of our time evacuating animals who had been left behind in the Lake Arrowhead area," said Bevan. "The strange thing is that the weather shifted, and we ended up doing those rescues in the freezing cold and snow! There were neighborhoods destroyed by fire now being covered with heavy snow. We had to take care driving because of black ice on the roads. It was surreal." In the end, The HSUS team helped San Bernardino County Animal Services retrieve hundreds of animals.

These disasters point to the progress made in emergency planning for animals, but also the need for animal owners to be better prepared to evacuate their pets when danger strikes.

continued from "Florida Plate," page 1  
animal-friend license plate bills are Rep. Nan Rich and Sen. Debbie Wasserman Schultz. They have been active in the plate campaign for more than a year and have worked hard to gain the support of their legislative colleagues.

H.B. 211 and S.B. 1366 call for the animal-friend license plate to be available in 2005 for an additional \$25 fee. The proceeds will go into a fund within the state Department of Agriculture that will make grants to non-profits and public shelters to provide local sterilization of dogs and cats. The goal is to prevent unwanted births of puppies and kittens and hopefully reduce the number of animals euthanized in shelters and abandoned in the streets.

SERO, the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, the Florida Animal Control Association, and a group of dedicated volunteers form the Animal Friend Coalition, which has been working on the plate campaign since early in 2003. The groups, plus a member of the public and one representative of a local animal group, will form the committee that distributes the funds. Revenues could be in excess of \$1 million if 40,000 plates are sold.

For more information about the plate, contact our office or go to [www.floridaanimalfriend.com](http://www.floridaanimalfriend.com).

### Florida

- H.B. 211/S.B.1366, animal-friend license plate
- S.B. 1418, prohibition of Venezuelan rodeo, in which bulls are flipped by their tails

### Mississippi

- S.B. 2703, an upgrade of animal cruelty laws, including felony provisions
- H.B. 109 allows non-economic damages to

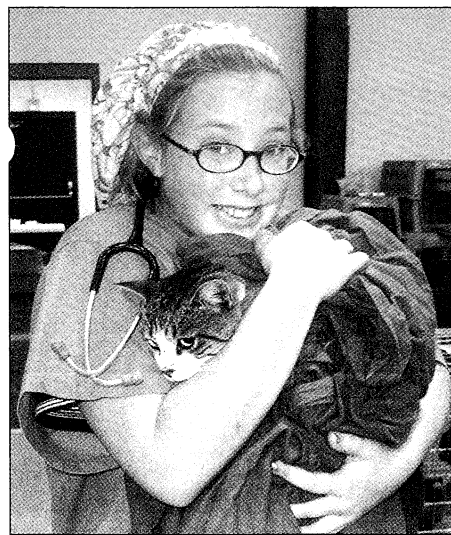
someone whose pet is intentionally killed by another

### South Carolina

- Bonding provisions for the care of animals seized during animal cruelty cases (no number at this time)
- S. 783 targets animal hoarders and sets up bonding provisions to cover the cost of animal care in such cases



These dachshunds were evacuated to a pet-friendly shelter in San Bernardino during the wildfires.



## RAVS Vet Clinics Go to Georgia

Last fall, a gymnasium in Morgan County, Georgia, stopped being a place for games and became a large-scale veterinary operating facility when The HSUS brought its Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) clinic to the county east of Atlanta. The volunteers and staff spayed and neutered more than 100 animals for free over the course of a weekend.

RAVS generally operates on Native American reservations and in the poorest of Appalachian communities. In 2003, RAVS clinics cared for more than 24,000 animals, providing an estimated \$1 million in free veterinary services to the communities it

A veterinary student volunteer comforts a feline patient at the RAVS clinic in Morgan County, Georgia.

visited. This time, Morgan County Animal Control contacted RAVS to assist with the sterilization of pets from its lowest income areas. The small agency works hard to help the citizens in its county, but has been limited in being able to provide free spay/neuter.

RAVS utilizes the services of volunteer veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary students from all over the country. For the students, the clinics are a great teaching tool and an excellent opportunity to practice what they have learned in school. They get the chance to perform surgeries (under the careful supervision of certified veterinarians, of course).

For the community, the clinic brings veterinary care that pet owners may not be able to afford otherwise. "It doesn't matter whether they are rich or poor, the love people feel for their companion animals is the same," says SERO Director Laura Bevan. "People fretted over their dogs and cats as they were led away for surgery, and hurried back later in the day to make sure they were okay. Some even cried when their animals were returned sterilized with all their vaccinations and heartworm tested. It was a great weekend!"

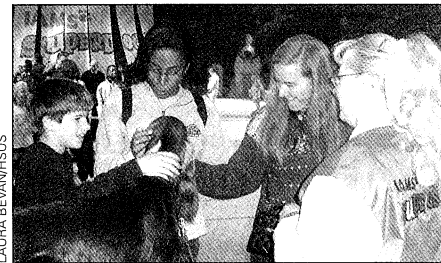
The HSUS gives kudos to Morgan County Animal Control and its supporters for all their hard work in hosting the RAVS clinic. More RAVS clinics are planned in 2004 for Georgia and Mississippi. For more information about RAVS, go to [www.hsus.org/ravs](http://www.hsus.org/ravs).

## Pet Fest is Super Fun

The HSUS brought its Pet Fest America to the Southeast in February and March with shows in Atlanta and Greenville, South Carolina. The event was a unique blend of entertainment and education for animal lovers. While the highlight of the event was the Iams Superdogs, there were also exhibits by local shelters and rescue groups.

The Iams Superdogs are four-legged acrobats who put on a fast-paced show filled with gravity-defying jumps, feats of agility, and high-speed chases, all choreographed to music and lights. The canines are all family pets, and many of the dogs come from shelters or rescue groups.

"Because all the dogs are, first and foremost, members of a family, the show is really about how people can have fun and bond with their pets, and how pets can do some amazing things as a result," said organizer Carroll Thrift. "So it's a perfect fit with the mission of The HSUS—to help people make the most of their relationships with their pets."



## I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about

- \_\_\_ Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative.
- \_\_\_ Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency.
- \_\_\_ Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

- \_\_\_ Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.
- \_\_\_ Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL (OPTIONAL) \_\_\_\_\_

Promoting the protection of all animals

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES.**  
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE  
1624 Metropolitan Circle, Suite B  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

# Director's Report



**By Laura Bevan**

*Director of the Southeast Regional Office*

## Fifty Years to be Proud of!

**H**appy 50th anniversary, HSUS! In 1954, a small group of humanitarians created a national animal protection organization with the vision of making the world better for animals and humans alike. Their vision was summed up in this statement: "The HSUS is dedicated to creating a world where our relationship with animals is guided by compassion. We seek a truly humane society in which animals are respected for their intrinsic value, and where the human-animal bond is strong." That sounds wonderful—even easy—but the last 50 years have been filled with challenges and setbacks our founders couldn't have imagined.

My personal history with The HSUS began in 1987, when I became SERO's program coordinator. Armed with a love of animals and a family history of involvement with local humane societies, I didn't comprehend the breadth and depth of HSUS's involvement in all kinds of animal issues. I also had no clue that my job would include seeing some of the most horrendous cruelties perpetrated on living creatures and dealing with people in some of their most

selfish, barbaric moments. Thankfully, the balance is that some of the most wonderful people are on the animals' side, and it is invigorating to work with them. It is both the best and worst of jobs.

Of course, working for The HSUS is more than a job. There is no 9 to 5 with an hour lunch. It is more a way of life, working to accomplish what we want, and the need to do so never ends. Just in the last 17 years of our joint history, the organization and the issues have expanded

dramatically. In the Southeast region alone, we have been at the forefront of such issues as animal sacrifice, greyhound racing, drug use in horse racing, animal fighting, hog dog rodeos, disaster planning and response, and the protection of the manatee. We have passed major legislation concerning humane euthanasia of shelter animals and livestock, felony animal cruelty, banning dog and cat fur products, regulating pet dealers and dangerous dogs, creating animal-friendly license plates, and much more.

The HSUS's 50th anniversary gives us an opportunity to look back over the past half century and reassess our goals for the next 50. It is also a time for me to look back over the past 17 years. If I chose my most notable contribution to HSUS's history, it would be my involvement in the development of disaster planning and response for animals. Hurricane Andrew changed my life and shifted The HSUS from an organization that simply responded to help animals impacted by disasters to one that leads the charge for local, state, and the federal governments to include animals in their emergency plans. In the 12 years since Andrew, we have come so far, but we still have a long way to go. Here's to the next 50 years!

## Contacting HSUS

### Write:

HSUS Southeast Regional Office  
1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

### Call:

850-386-3435

### Fax:

850-386-4534

### Web Page:

[www.hsus.org/sero](http://www.hsus.org/sero)

*Promoting the protection of all animals*

COURTESY OF "ALBANY HERALD." PHOTO BY ROBIN CHRISTMAN



**SERO Director Laura Bevan helps rescue a dog during the Albany flooding of 1994 in Georgia.**

CELEBRATING ALL ANIMALS  
**50<sup>th</sup>**  
Anniversary  
**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

The *SERO Regional News* is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States, Southeast Regional Office, 1624 Metropolitan Cir., Ste. B, Tallahassee, FL 32308; 850-386-3435. Laura Bevan, director. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed on federal holidays.

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